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"DARE TO BE NAÏVE." - R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER

While attending recent meetings to discuss questions concerning the Rodeo Grounds property in June Lake, the question that keeps recurring to me is "How could the Forest Service think that it was appropriate to trade the whole hillside from North Shore Drive practically to Gull Lake into private hands?". This land that I am referring to is primarily designated as areas #2 and #3 in the Rodeo Grounds Specific Plan.

I understand the basics of such land trades and how the U.S.F.S. is able to obtain land that it deems important areas of public land in exchange for property of estimated equal value that it considers more appropriate for private development. And I feel that some development at the base of June Mountain is necessary and will be a major benefit for the ski area.

The problem for me is the vast size of the current plans and how it will affect what we have here in June Lake. Or should I say what we don't have.

When the land trade for the "Rodeo Grounds" was completed in the late 80's Dave McCoy spoke of what he described as an anchor hotel like a Marriot at the base of the mountain. It was similar to what he hoped to do at chair 15 in Mammoth. Never was there a mention of a 100+ homes being built. Very few in the community understood the boundaries of this trade as the Rodeo Grounds is the name for a meadow well off of Hwy. 158. And nobody foresaw a tract of high end homes being built above the highway. But someone with the Forest Service must have realized by looking at the map that 90 acres is much larger than what is needed for base facilities and lodging.

In the June lake Area Plan it expresses three specific wishes of the community. That we become a moderately sized, self contained, year-round resort. That we retain our unique character. And please excuse the expression, "That we don't become another Mammoth." I believe the last statement expresses a desire to keep the small town atmosphere which we now enjoy and to not become, or look like, "Just another ski resort".

When you enter or approach many of the major ski resorts in the United States one of the first things you often notice is the many large and beautiful houses. Many times these homes do not detract from the area that they are built in if the lot size is large. At other places they are much less appealing due to small lot sizes and close proximity to their neighbors. This gives the area a less than rural appearance and takes away from the natural environment that surrounds it. The natural environment that everyone seems to agree is the Eastern Sierra's greatest resource.

If this large subdivision of homes and townhouses is approved I believe that it will be much more destructive to our "unique character" than the proposed condominium village itself. There are numerous reasons for this. To highlight just a few of them, the area is right off the highway, in the center of the canyon, with high visibility, and directly overlooks Reverse Creek Campground. The primary view from this campground is the area #2 hillside. The campers will be looking right at this large development.

Now for an idea which I realize will sound naïve and simplistic on the surface, but if we think about it, may have some real merit. What if the Forest Service were willing to do another land trade concerning this property? The Forest Service could give Intrawest property that is equal in value to this segment of the Rodeo Grounds and coincides with Intrawest's developments now in progress. The land that I am suggesting for this trade would be adjacent to Mammoth Mtn. Perhaps at the Canyon Lodge area or off Eagle Express. This property would offer ski in ski out convenience. It would be built in an area that is already highly disturbed. It would not be highly visible. The infrastructure of lifts, restaurants and entertainment are either in place or planned. It would be closer to the airports, both Mammoth & Bishop. It would decrease the density and overall number of people at one time in June Lake which seems to be a major area of contention concerning the Rodeo Grounds development. And it would allow the Forest Service to correct a gross error in judgment. Thanks for the opportunity to voice this opinion.

Sincerely,
Van Gould